



The Plan for How We Live & Grow

Chapter One – Executive Summary

1 Introduction

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3 “Columbia Imagined – The Plan for How We Live & Grow” is the City of Columbia’s new comprehensive
4 land use plan. This plan is intended to provide residents, appointed boards and commissions, and elected
5 officials with a document that will help guide and direct the City’s growth until 2030. The plan builds upon
6 a foundation of public involvement begun with the efforts of Imagine Columbia’s Future (2006-2008) and
7 is in direct response to one of the recommendations of the Development Citizen’s Topic Group that
8 suggested, as a strategy, to “implement a growth management plan that incorporates form-based zoning.”
9

10 As with most comprehensive plans, the process of preparing to write this document involved many
11 different individuals. At the local level and in accordance with State Statutes, the Planning and Zoning
12 Commission is charged with the responsibility of preparing the plan and making recommendation on it to
13 the City Council. The City Council, instead of assigning the Planning Commission alone for this effort,
14 appointed a 15-member Task Force to assist in the public outreach and research efforts to compile the
15 materials that follow. These groups were further assisted by consultants from the University of Missouri
16 and the staff of the City’s Community Development Department.
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18 While the efforts of the above groups have yielded the plan that follows, the ideas that this plan has been
19 built upon would not have been realized without the involvement of the residents of Columbia. A goal of
20 achieving the participation of 3% of the City’s population, roughly 3,000 people, was set during the kick-off
21 meeting held on XXXXX. Completion of this plan saw XXXXX citizens participate in the development of
22 Columbia Imagined. This participation has been critical in shaping and influencing the contents of the
23 chapters that follow, especially the chapters dealing with the “Big Ideas” and the “Growth Plan and Policy
24 Options.”
25

26 Preparing to Plan

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28 Embarking on the task of developing a comprehensive plan such requires understanding of what one has
29 to work with and what has proven to be successful in other communities similar to our own. To this end,
30 the Task Force spent the first 10 months of this planning process learning what planning efforts existed
31 within Columbia and how these efforts have impacted the development that now exists. During this same
32 period, the Task Force organized into sub-committees to evaluate other cities comprehensive plans and to
33 review pre-existing goals and objectives from the Imagine Columbia’s Future visioning efforts. The results
34 of this planning to plan phase of the Columbia Imagined process have influenced the plan framework and
35 outreach efforts used by the Task Force and Planning Commission in the development of this plan.
36

37 The first and most notable influence of this phase was the establishment of this document’s framework.
38 The Task Force’s Purposeful Planning Subcommittee identified seven theme areas around which this plan
39 has been developed. These themes are the result of a reorganization of the 12 topic areas listed in the City
40 Council enabling resolution (# ____) that authorized the comprehensive plan and were seen by the
41 subcommittee as superior to the traditional listing of topics like land use, transportation, housing, etc.
42

43 The seven theme areas are:

- 44
- 45 1. Land Use and Growth Management
- 46 2. Environmental Management
- 47 3. Infrastructure

4. Mobility, Connectivity and Accessibility
5. Economic Development
6. Inter-Governmental Cooperation
7. Livable and Sustainable Communities

A second notable outcome of the planning to plan phase dealt with designing the public engagement process. A conscious effort was made to ensure that residents would be engaged and that many input opportunities would sustain resident involvement throughout the plan development process. To this end, ColumbiaImagined.com, a website devoted to the plan, was created in addition to social media sites on Facebook and Twitter. Public engagement meetings were throughout the community and “meeting kits” were developed to allow interested residents a convenient way to share the plan’s objectives with neighbors or other interested parties. On-line surveying and strategically- placed survey drop boxes were also implemented as part of the public outreach efforts to ensure a sustained stream of public engagement.

These combined efforts have influenced the contents of the document that follows. The comments, ideas, goals, and objectives obtained through these outreach efforts are seen throughout the plan. This plan, while prepared by professional staff, is a publicly influenced document that incorporates the ideas representative of the diversity found within our community. This plan is what Columbians have “imagined” our future to be.

The Goals of Columbia Imagined

Columbia Imagined will replace the existing City comprehensive plan, entitled Metro 2020, which was adopted in February 2001. While Columbia Imagined will contain several similar elements to Metro 2020, such as a land use plan policy and recommendations, it will also look at the social and environmental implications that land use changes have on the community. These added areas of focus are seen as important elements in more holistically planning for the City’s future.

Columbia Imagined will be a plan that:

1. Provides a framework for shaping and managing growth and allowing for more detailed plans.
2. Is built upon and supported by current and accurate data that is a product of community conversation and outreach that becomes a source of information
3. Incorporates best management practices of planning and sustainability
4. Provides opportunity to address key issues facing Columbia
5. Provides opportunity for review, update, and amendments
6. Incorporates the physical and economic aspects for Columbia as well as the social issues
7. “Connects the dots” to other City plans
8. Provides reliable guidance for rezoning, subdivision, and plan approvals
9. Includes implementation measures and strategies
10. Incorporates and identifies opportunities for more regional planning collaboration and builds upon existing relationships.

Each of these goals will either be visible within the chapters that follow or identified as opportunities for future policy development as part of the plan implementation strategies.

Guiding Principles

The success of a plan is, in part, based on how successful it is in providing meaningful guidance to its end users. To ensure that this plan is utilized as a resource in future decision making, its contents should be focused on a set of common objectives or general principles. Conformity with these objectives or principles should become the benchmark with which future policy or land use decisions are compared and potentially based. If particular policies or proposals deviate from these objectives and principles, careful consideration of the ramifications should be given prior to a final approval by elected officials.

This check and balance approach is viewed as necessary to ensure that the process of public engagement utilized throughout the development of Columbia Imagined is upheld. Unnecessary deviation from these generally expressed objectives and principles may compromise public trust in the overall planning process and diminish future public involvement in updating this plan as well as other planning efforts necessary to facilitate implementation of its goals and objectives.

As part of Phase 3 of the Columbia Imagined engagement process, the public was asked to provide its perspective on what were its favorite activities and places within the community as well as those things citizens least desired to have least changed in Columbia. Also during this phase, the public was asked to provide their input on what issues residents have seen or believe exist in and around Columbia affecting its growth. Upon completion of Phase 3, the data was analyzed and several objectives and principles were identified as indicators of our community's health or what could be considered Columbia Imagined's guiding principles.

These guiding principles are interspersed throughout the pages that follow. In some instances they are readily apparent, while in others new policy or regulation may be needed so that they may become part of the decision making process. Below are the guiding principles:

1. Preservation and enhancement of the existing network of **recreation** facilities, programs, and opportunities shall influence future growth and development within and surrounding Columbia.
2. Identify, promote, and enhance **cultural opportunities and the arts** throughout Columbia as it continues to grow in population and as a regional destination.
3. Balance the **quality of life** enjoyed by residents with the needs of providing new employment and housing opportunities for an increasing population.
4. Identify and enhance opportunities for continued investment in **downtown** such that it becomes the preferred hub of activity for cultural, dining, and recreational activities.
5. Leverage Columbia's location, quality of life, access to high-quality education/research facilities, and medical services in its pursuit of sustainable **economic opportunities** viewed as essential to compete in a global economy.
6. Balance the needs of growth such that the **small town feel** of Columbia is retained through sustainable programs, policies, and innovative regulations.
7. Acknowledge, respect, and preserve the **natural environment** in and around Columbia so that its aesthetic and ecological value is retained for future generations.
8. Preserve the **historic integrity** of Columbia's neighborhoods and downtown through various methods such as education, incentives, and regulations so that these resources and the history they represent are not lost as the community continues to develop.

9. Support and encourage **educational opportunities** with Columbia’s institutions of higher education as well as its public and private schools so that partnerships may be forged, permitting enhanced economic stature within the region, state, and nation.

Chapter Summaries

The following provides brief descriptions of each chapter of Columbia Imagined. Included within these sections are highlights of information believed to be most critical in understanding the broader plan and its goals and objectives. Individuals desiring further information are encouraged to read the entire document.

Chapter One – Existing Conditions

Chapter One provides background information relating to what makes Columbia the place that it is. In this chapter, the seven theme elements are used as the organizing structure in presenting the existing condition of the City. The chapter starts by describing the history of planning in Columbia and wraps up with what efforts make our community livable and sustainable. In between descriptive information is giving about our efforts toward environmental management, the state of our infrastructure, how we move about and connect neighborhoods, what drives the economy, and what efforts exist to cooperate with other local and quasi-governmental agencies. This chapter is intended to give the reader a basic understanding of who we are and where we’ve been.

Chapter Two – The Planning Process

Chapter Two explains the process, techniques, and tools used in the development of Columbia Imagined that engaged the public in the preparation of the plan. This chapter is based on the six-step process used to produce the plan. In each step, the text explains what tools were used to obtain public input and provides examples of the engagement materials. In addition to providing these summaries, each step foreshadows how the information obtained will be used throughout the rest of the plan. The chapter concludes with a discussion on how the plan will be updated and how often.

Chapter Three – The “Big Ideas”

Chapter Three explores the “Big Ideas” to emerge from asking the community “*What do we care about?*” and “*Where are we headed?*” during the third and fourth phases of the plan. Big ideas are the guiding principles and priorities the plan must consider when looking at growth scenarios and policy recommendations. These principles and priorities are reflective of the community’s favorite things about Columbia (those aspects that must be preserved and promoted) and describe what the community should become over the next twenty years. The issues, goals, and objectives described in Chapter Three align the plan with the pulse of the community.

Chapter Four – Growth Patterns & Policies

Chapter Four provides the reader with an understanding of what the future land use needs for Columbia will be based upon the likelihood that the community will continue to grow over the next 20 years, the planning horizon, for which Columbia Imagined is being prepared. Communicating these needs will be done from two perspectives – one based on analysis of existing and future growth trends and one based on preferred growth concepts.

1 In the section dealing with the growth trend analysis, population growth, land use distribution, and land
2 use capacity are discussed as they relate to baseline data, trend growth capacity, and commercial and
3 Industrial growth. This section concludes with what the future land use pattern will look like if Columbia
4 continues to grow as it has in the past.

5
6 The section dealing with preferred growth concepts looks at each of the Plan’s guiding principles and tie
7 them together with the goals and objectives expressed by the public during the forums held in Phase 4 of
8 the planning process entitled “Where are we headed”. This section offers alternatives for Columbia’s
9 future land use pattern and illustrates how incorporating the Plan’s guiding principles into the land use
10 decision process can have an impact on future land distribution.

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12 The chapter concludes with the future land use map for the study area.

13 14 Chapter Five - Implementation

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16 Chapter Five will introduce the reader to the Columbia Imagined implementation matrix, implementation
17 tracking process, and matrix modification procedures. Within the matrix are the Plan’s goals, objectives,
18 and strategies as well as the key stakeholders and time horizons necessary to complete each identified
19 task or policy objective. The implementation matrix will be structured around broader policy objectives
20 developed as part of the preceding chapter. The matrix is intended to guide the staff, Planning and Zoning
21 Commission, and the City Council in making necessary changes to the City’s regulations such that the
22 Plan’s broad objectives are fulfilled.

23 24 Glossary

25 26 List of Figures, Maps and Tables

27 28 Appendix